



South Dakota Department of the Military South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs



235TH MP COMPANY PREPARES FOR SECOND TOUR TO AFGHANISTAN

The South Dakota Army National Guard's 235th Military Police Company sent 124 soldiers to Fort Chaffee, Ark., from Dec. 2 -14 to complete pre-mobilization training for the unit's upcoming deployment to Afghanistan in February.

The 235th, based out of Rapid City with a detachment in Sioux Falls, has a mission to provide security for U.S. military and coalition forces, force protection of installation and facilities and to guard prisoners of war and civilian internees.

This will be the 235th's second tour to Afghanistan since 2007, when the unit performed a similar mission to what they will be responsible for this deployment.

The unit first received a mobilization-alert notification in November 2011, and since April, soldiers have been preparing and training hard for their upcoming mission. According to the unit's leadership, the training opportunities offered at Fort Chaffee were second to none, allowing the unit to complete their required training to standard.

While at Fort Chaffee, soldiers completed their weapons qualification on the M9 pistol and M4 rifle, land navigation, hand-to-hand combat and battle drills training. The unit had 48 of the 124 soldiers qualify expert with a 98 percent first-time go on the M9 and 94 percent first-time go on the M4.

Some unit members were able to showcase some of that training to their employers, as the South Dakota Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, or ESGR, provided an opportunity for 11 employers to attend a Boss Lift, Dec. 11-12. While at Chaffee, employers observed soldiers conducting counter-IED (improvised explosive device) training, vehicle convoy-lane training and detainee operations.

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VA, SSA, AND IRS CUT RED TAPE FOR VETERANS AND SURVIVORS

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs announced it is cutting red tape for veterans by eliminating the need for them to complete an annual Eligibility Verification Report (EVR). The VA will implement a new process for confirming eligibility for benefits, and staff that had been responsible for processing the old form will instead focus on eliminating the compensation claims backlog.

Historically, beneficiaries have been required to complete an EVR each year to ensure their pension benefits continued. Under the new initiative, the VA will work with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and the Social Security Administration (SSA) to verify continued eligibility for pension benefits.

The VA estimates it would have sent nearly 150,000 EVRs to beneficiaries in January 2013. Eliminating these annual reports reduces the burden on veterans, their families, and survivors because they will not have to return these routine reports to the VA each year in order to avoid suspension of benefits. It also allows the VA to redirect more than 100 employees that usually process EVRs to work on eliminating the claims backlog.

All beneficiaries currently receiving VA pension benefits will receive a letter from the VA explaining these changes and providing instructions on how to continue to submit their unreimbursed medical expenses.

SD'S 88TH LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The 88th Session of the South Dakota Legislature will convene at approximately 1:00 pm on Tuesday, January 8, 2013, with Governor Dugaard's State of the State Address. This year's session is scheduled for 38 legislative days, with the main run concluding March 8. March 25 is reserved for considering gubernatorial vetoes.

Legislative actions can be viewed at:

<http://legis.state.sd.us/sessions/2013/index.aspx>

Legislative bills can be tracked or monitored at:

<http://legis.state.sd.us/sessions/2013/BillMenu.aspx>

Live broadcasts of legislative actions and committee meetings are provided by South Dakota Public Broadcasting at :

<http://legis.state.sd.us/sessions/2013/CommitteeMenu.aspx>



Upcoming Events

Jan. 1—Happy New Year

Jan. 7—Black Hills National Cemetery Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am

Jan. 8—SD 88th Legislative Session Opens

Jan. 8—Governor Dugaard's State of the State Address

Jan. 11—SFVAHCS Health Fair—Sioux Falls VA

Feb. 4—VFW Legislative Reception

Feb. 5—American Legion Legislative Reception

Feb. 7—SDNG Legislative Dining Out

Feb. 8-10—American Legion Mid-Winter Conference—Cedar Shores in Oacoma

Apr. 1—Black Hills National Cemetery Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am

May 3-5—DAV State Convention—The Lodge—Deadwood

Jul. 1—Black Hills National Cemetery Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am

Oct. 1—Black Hills National Cemetery Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am

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